

The Ten Commandments  
Thieves and Thievery  
Exodus 20:15

We live in a world where people have little respect for the property of others. Even when devastating tragedies strike (such as hurricanes), people race each other to see how much they can steal before the authorities restore order. The violence we see in the streets of our cities, regardless of how the rioters rationalize their actions, displays a clear disregard for people and disrespect for their property.

1. The gospel calls us to respect what belongs to others.
2. The gospel calls us to generosity not greed.
3. The gospel calls us to contentment not discontent.

Jesus used his last breaths to gift eternal life to none other than a thief. Jesus died on a cross between two thieves, two people who very clearly had violated even the most superficial understanding of the eighth commandment. They were robbers, bandits, thieves. In that dying breath, Jesus gave the thief hanging next to him on the cross, the promise of an inheritance that he had foolishly wasted his whole life trying to find. In that one moment, Jesus reoriented the thief on the cross, helping him to see that only in God's Chosen One would he finally find what he was looking for. The same is true for us today.

For further reflection:

Question 110 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?" The answer given is this: "He forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law. But in God's sight theft also includes cheating and swindling our neighbor by schemes made to appear legitimate, such as: inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume; fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money; excessive interest; or nay other means forbidden by God. In addition he forbids all greed and pointless squandering of his gifts." How does the catechism enrich your understanding of the command? Is there anything that you hadn't considered before? How might a deeper understanding of the commandment change the ways you conduct yourself in business and in life?